

Say! Can You Beat 'Em?

BY SEWELL FORD.

A Tale in Which Professor McCabe Shows the "400" a Few Things About the Manly Art :: :: :: :: ::

It was Pinckney that got me up against this Blument aggregation. Course, I can't register any kick; for when it comes to doing the hair-trigger friendship act, Pinckney's the real skookum preferred. But this was once when he slipped me a blank.

Looked like he had with a spoon, too, at the start. All I had to do was to take the one-thirty-six out to Blument, put in an hour with Jarvis, catch the three-fifty back, and charge anything I had the front to name. What's more, I kind of cottoned to Jarvis, from the drop of the hat.

He was waitin' at the station for me, with a high-wheeled cart, and a couple of gingers circus horses hitched one in front of the other like two links of weinerwurst. They were tryin' to play leap-frog as the train comes in; but it didn't seem to worry Jarvis any more than if he was drivin' a pair of mail-wagon plugs.

One of those big pink-and-white chaps, Jarvis was, with nice blue eyes and ashes-of-roses hair. There was a lot of him, and it was well placed. He had sort of a soothing, easy way of talking, too, like a church organ with the soft pedal on.

Me and Jarvis got acquainted right away. He said he didn't care much about the physical-culture game—didn't exactly need it, and he'd been through all that before, anyway—but mother and sister wanted him to take it up again, and Pinckney'd told what a crackerjack I was; so he thought he might as well go in for it. He said he had a little hole fixed up where one would do that sort of thing, y'know, and he hoped I wouldn't find it such a beastly bore, after all.

Oh, that was a gent, Mr. Jarvis. But what got me was the careless way he juggled the reins over those two gold-balled nags that was doin' a rag-time runaway, and him usin' only three fingers, and touchin' 'em up with the whip. It was his lucky day, though, and we got there without an ambulance.

It was somethin' of a place to get to, yes—about a hundred and 'steen rooms and bath, I should say, with a back yard that must have slopped over into Connecticut some. That's what you get by havin' a grandpaw who put his thumb-print on every dollar that came his way.

I guess Jarvis was used to livin' in a place like that, though. He didn't stop to tell what anything cost, or show off any of the bric-a-brac. He just led the way through seven or eight parlors and palm rooms, until we fetched up in the hole he'd fixed up to exercise in.

It was about three times as big as the studio here, and if there was anything missing from the outfit I couldn't have told what it was—flyin' rings, bars, rowlin' machine, punchin' bags, dumb-bells—say! with a secretary and a few wall mottees, there was a makin' of a Y. M. C. A. branch right on the ground. Then there was a dressin' room, a shower bath, and a tiled plunge tank like they have in these Turkish places.

"Lucky you don't go in strong for exercise," says I. "If you did, I s'pose you'd fix up Madison Square Garden."

"That architect was an ass," says Jarvis; "but mother told him to go ahead. Fanny he thought I was Sandoz, you know."

Well, we gets into our gym clothes, picks out a set of kid pillows, and had just stepped out on the rubber for a little warm-up, when in sails a ruff studio here, and if there was anything that looked as though she might be mother; a slim baby-eyed one, that any piker would have played for sister; and another, that I couldn't place at all. She wasn't a Fifth Avenue girl—you could tell that by the way she wore her hair bunched down on the nape of her neck—but it was a cinch she wasn't any poor relation.

"Lost their way goin' to the matinee," says Jarvis; "but mother told him to go ahead. Fanny he thought I was Sandoz, you know."

Jarvis gets pink clear down to his collar bone, and says somethin' that sounds like, "Oh, splash!" I beg pardon, professor," says he. "It's my mother and the girls. I'll send them off."

"That's right; shoo 'em," says I. But mother wouldn't shoo any more than a trolley car. "Now, don't be silly about it, Jarvis, dear," says she. "You know how Lady Evelyn dotes on athletics, and how your sister and I do, too. So we're just going to stay and watch you."

"Oh, come, mother," says Jarvis; "it isn't just the thing, you know."

"Ask Lady Evelyn," says mother. "Why, she's one of the patronesses of the Oldwich Cricket club, and pours tea for the young men at their games. Now, go ahead, Jarvis; there's a dear."

He looks at me for a tip, and that gives him a hunch. "But the professor—," says he.

"Oh, Professor McCabe doesn't mind us a bit; do you now, professor?" says sister, buttin' in, real easy and glibly. "I can stand it if you can," says I, and she tips me a goo-goo smile that was all to the candle violets.

"There!" says mother. "Now go right on as though we were not here at all. But I'll remember not to be too rough, Jarvis, dear."

And she'd turned a shoulder to us, like she was wonderin' how long it would be before the next act was put on. Couldn't blame her, either. That was the weakest imitation of a sparin' bout I ever stood up in.

But there was no stirrin' Jarvis. He'd got stagefright, or cold feet, or something of the kind. It wa'n't that he didn't know how, for he had all the tags of a good amateur about his moves; but somehow he'd been queered. So, as soon as we can, we quits. Then sister gets her chance to gush. She rushes to the front and turns the baby stare on me like I was all the roods.

"Oh, it was just too sweet for anything!" says she. "Do you know, professor, I've always wanted to see a real boxing match; but Jarvis would never let me before. He'd told me horrid stories about how brutal they were. Now I know they're nothing of the sort. I shall come every time you and Jarvis have one, and so will Lady Evelyn. You didn't think it was brutal, did you, Evelyn?"

Lady Evelyn humped her eyebrows and gave me one look. "No," says she. "I shouldn't call it brutal, exactly."

And then she swallows a polite, society snicker in a way that made me mad from the ground up. Jarvis didn't lose any of that, either. I got a glimpse of him turnin' automobile red, and tryin' to choke himself with his tongue.

"It's somethin' like the wand drill we used to do at college," says sister. "Don't you like the wand drill, professor?"

"When it ain't done too rough, I'm dead stuck on it," says I. "I just knew you didn't like rough games," says she. "You don't look as though you would, you know."

"That's right," says I. "Jarvis says that once you knocked out three men in one evening, but I'm sure you weren't rude about it," she gurgles.

"And that's no pipe, either," says I. "I wouldn't be rude for money."

"What is a knock-out, anyway?" says she. "Why," says I, "it's just pushin' a feller around the platform until he's too dizzy to stand up."

"What fun!" says sister. "We makes a break for the dressin' room about then, and the delegation clears out. On the way back to the station Jarvis apologizes seven different ways, and ends up by givin' me the cue to the whole game."

Seems that mother's steady job in life was to get him married off to some one that suited her for a daughter-in-law. She'd been at it for five or six years, but Jarvis had always blocked her, and if there was anything she shows up, I guessed that he'd picked her out himself, and was gettin' along fine, when mother begins to mix in and arrange things. Evelyn shies at that, and commences to hand Jarvis the frapped smile. This little visit to the sparin' exhibition the old lady had planned for Evelyn's special benefit.

"But hang it all!" says Jarvis. "I couldn't stand up there and show off like a Sunday school boy speaking a piece. Made me feel like a silly ass, you know."

"You looked the part," says I. "About one more of those stunts, and Lady Evelyn'll want to adopt the two of us."

"No more," says he. "She must think I'm a milk-sop. Why, she's got brothers that are officers in the British army, fellows who got themselves shot, and win medals, and all that sort of thing."

Well, I was sorry for Jarvis; for the girl was a good looker, all right, and they'd have mated up fine. But I'm to schatchen. Physical culture's my game, an' I ain't takin' no no marriage bureau as a side line. So we shook hands and called it a cancelled contract. Then Jarvis jerks those circus horses out of a bow-knot and rounds the corner on one wheel, while I climbs aboard the choo-choo cars and gets back near Broadway.

I wasn't lookin' to run across Jarvis again, seein' as how me and him has our own particular sets; but 'twasn't more'n three days before he

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There was a squeal or two as we sheds our bath robes.

I'm not the sort she thinks I am. And I want you to help me out, professor."

"Ah, say, you got the wrong transfer," says I. "I'm nothin' but a dub at anything like that. What you want is to get Clyde Fitch to build you a nice little one-act scene where you can play leadin' gent to her leadin' lady."

"You're mistaken, Shorty," says he. "I'm not putting up a game. No heroes for me. I'm just a plain, ordinary chump, and willing to let it go at that. But I'm no softy, and she's got to know it. There's another thing: Another sister have carried this athletic nonsense about far enough. They'd like to exhibit me to all fool women they know, as a kind of modern Hercules, and I'm sick of it. Now, I've got a plan that ought to cure 'em of that."

For Jarvis wa'n't so slow. Say, he



She gets one arm under his neck just as he opens his eyes.

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Mike gets the hint that this was a swell thing we was goin' to, so he shows up in South Brooklyn evenin' dress—plus hat, striped shirt, and black coat. I makes him chuck the linen for a sweater; but I couldn't separate him from the shiny toplice. The Gorilla always wears a swimmin' jersey with a celluloid dicky; so he passes muster.

Anyways, when old Kneep Pants, the Blument butler, sees us lined up at the front entrance, we had him popped. He was goin' to ring up the police reserves, when Mr. Jarvis comes out and passes us in.

"They're a group of forty-nine per cents," says I; "but you said you wanted that kind."

"It's all right," says he. "I've explained to the ladies that a few of my friends interested in physical culture were coming up today, and that perhaps they'd better stay out; but they'll be there just the same."

He got 'em right, too. Just as we'd fixed the ropes, and got out the palls at Monna in the corner, the insurance companies concerned no less than \$1,500,000 in English money, the king having insured himself more heavily than any other monarch of his time. The loss was, however, very widely distributed, the risk having been regarded as a comparatively safe one as royal "lives" go.

The reverse was the case with that of Alexander, I of Serbia, murdered along with Queen Draga in 1903. Not very long before the tragedy took place efforts were made to insure the king's life in London for £20,000 for the premiums asked were considered too high, and the business was reported to have been concluded on the continent.

Here looked upon the risk as a very serious one, and the accuracy of this view was proved when, within a very short time, claims were made, chiefly upon Dutch and Belgian offices, for the amounts of the policies.

In contrast to this one may refer to the instance of the late Prince Imperial of France. When he was still very young he had insured his son's life with English companies for £2,000,000, payable on the prince attaining his majority. The sum was duly collected, but by that time the previously deposed emperor was dead

and the prince was a student at Woolwich. Three years later he fell beneath Zulu arrows.

Of all royal "lives" that of King Edward is regarded most favorably by insurers. This is because the personal habits of the king are such that he is insured for vast sums; but, besides, he is insured for various reasons, would otherwise find himself unfortunately happening to him financially catastrophic to themselves.

Thus, before the commencement of every London season many manufacturers and tradesmen whose business depends upon the court functions going through without interruption take out policies on the king's life for very large sums. So many a man who desires to protect capital in consols, for the death of the ruler would probably mean a considerable, though possibly temporary, fall in the premier security. Others may insure the king because his "life" is one of those mentioned in the leases by which they hold land or property.

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I'd forgot to tip off "Slattery that there wasn't any postprandials expected of him; so the first thing I knew he was makin' his little ring speech, just the same if he was announcin' events at the Never Die Athletic club."

"Now gents—and ladies," says he, "this is a five-round go for a stay, between Professor Shorty McCabe, ex-lightweight champion of the world, and another gent who goes on the cards as an unknown. It's catchweights, an' the winner pulls down the whole basket of greens. There ain't goin' to be no hittin' after the clinch, and if there's any foul, you leave it to me. Don't come buttin' in. It's been put up to me to keep time an' referee this mix-up, and I don't want no help. You bottleholders stay in your corners till the count's over. Now are you ready?"

There was a squeal or two when we sheds our bathrobes and steps to the middle, and I guesses that the ladies was gettin' their first view of ring clothes. But I wasn't lookin' anywhere but at Jarvis. And, say, he would have made a hit anywhere. He had just paddin' enough to round him out well, and not so much as to make him look

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ladyfied. Course, he was a good, many pounds overweight for the job he'd tackled, but he'd have looked mighty well on a poster. Honest, it seemed a shame to have to mussy him.

Jarvis wa'n't there to stand in the limelight, though. He went right to work as though he meant business. I'd kind of figured on lettin' him have his own way for a couple of rounds, takin' it easy, an' jockeyin' him into makin' a showin'; but the first thing I knows he lands a right swing that near lifts me off my feet, an' Swiftly sings out to me to stop my kiddin'.

"Beg pardon," says Jarvis; "but I'm after that fifty."

"If I'd had a putty jaw, you'd got it then," says I. "Here's the twin to that."

But my swipe didn't reach him by an inch, and the best I could do was to swap half-arm jolts until I'd got steadied down again. Well, say I wasn't more'n an hour findin' out that I couldn't monkey much with Jarvis. He knew how to let his weight follow the glove, and he blocked as pretty as if he was punchin' the bag.

"You didn't learn that in no college," says I, fiddlin' for a place to plant my left.

"You're quite right," says he, and boxes like a snore plow.

We stanced up a little in the second; but it was an even break at that, barrin' the fact that I played more for the wind, and had Jarvis breathin' fast when Slattery called quits. Gorilla Quigley was onto his job, though, an' he gives him good advice while he was wavin' the towel. I could hear him coachin' Jarvis to save his breath and make me do the rushin'.

"Don't waste no time on that cast-iron mug of his," says Gorilla. "All you gotta do is cover up an' stay the limit."

But that wa'n't Jarvis' program. He begins like a bridge car-rusher makin' for a seat, and he had me back into my corner in the time it all took. Jarvis wa'n't handin' out any love taps, either, and I didn't have beef enough to stop a hundred-an-eighty pound swing without feelin' the jar. I was dizzy from 'em, all right, but I jumps in close an' pounds away on his ribs until he gives ground. Then I comes the Nelson crouch, and rips a few cross-overs in where they'd do the most good.

That didn't stop him, though. Pretty soon he comes in for more. Say, I never see a guy that could look pleasant while he was passin' out hot ones. It wasn't a fightin' grin, same as Terry wears; it was just a calm, steady, business-like proposition, one of the kind that goes with a "Sorry to trouble you, but I've got to knock your block off." Now, I can grin, too, until I makes up my mind that it's time to pull the other chap's cork. But I was never up against any of this polite business before. It wins me, though. Right there I says to myself, "Jarvis, if you keep that up for two rounds more, you're welcome to win out. It was worth the money."

And just as I gets this notion in my nut, he cuts loose with a bunch of rapid-fire jabs that had me wonderin' where I'd be if one landed just right. I ain't got it mapped out yet, just how it happened, for about then the ladies lets go a lot of squeals, but I remembers stoppin' a facer that showed me pin-wheels, an' then I cuts fancy boxes."

We was roughin' it all over the ring, and Swiftly an' the Gorilla was yellin' things, an' Slattery was yellin' back at them, and the muss was as pretty as any ten-dollar-a-head crowd ever paid to see. One of all of a sudden Jarvis missed a swing, and I throws all I had into an upper cut. It connected with his chin dingle like a hammer on

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a nut. The next thing I knows Swiftly has the elbow-lock on me from behind, and Mike is standin' over Mr. Jarvis makin' the count.

Well, there wa'n't any cheerin' and shoutin'. I didn't have a chance to shake hands with any crazy bunch, or be toted off to the dressin' room on their shoulders. When I gets so I can look straight I sees mother keeled over in her chair, and sister fannin' her with the chocolate box. And say, I felt like a lead quarter. She was standin' up as stiff as a tin soldier on parade, with her eyes snappin' and her fingers clinched.

Just one of them looks was enough for me. I gets busy with a pall, and goes to work on Jarvis. He was clean out, of course, but restin' as easy as a baby. We was bringin' him round all right, when I feels a push that shoves me to one side, and in rushes Lady Evelyn. She gets one arm under his neck, just as he opens his eyes with that kind of a "What's the matter now?"